

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9353

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 04306

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN, SENV, UK, FR

SUBJECT: CONCORDE

REF: (A) LONDON 3938; (B) PARIS 8180

1. UPON RECEIPT REF B WE AGAIN CONTACTED BINNING, DG CONCORDE PROGRAM, CONCERNING DATES FOR CONCORDE BRIEFING IN WASHINGTON. BINNING SAID THAT UNTIL DECISIONS ARE TAKEN ON CONCORDE--WHETHER PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE AND, IF SO, HOW MANY AIRCRAFT WILL BE PRODUCED AND AMOUNT OF FUNDING THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE IN PROGRAM FOR FURTHER WORK ON REDUCING ENGINE EMISSIONS AND NOISE--HE IS NOT IN A POSITION TO UNDERTAKE MEANINGFUL BRIEFING FOR WASHINGTON AGENCIES.

2. BINNING SAID THAT BECAUSE OF FRENCH ELECTIONS, IT MAY BE LATTER HALF OF MAY BEFORE DECISIONS ON CONCORDE ARE TAKEN. BINNING IS OF THE VIEW THAT IT QUITE POSSIBLE FRENCH POSITION ON CONCORDE MAY CHANGE AS A RESULT OF ELECTIONS. FUTURE OF CONCORDE, THEREFORE, IS EVEN MORE UNCERTAIN THAN WHEN MINISTERS MET ON MARCH 29. BRITISH AND FRENCH CIVIL SERVANTS WILL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT THE
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REVIEW OF POSSIBLE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO BOTH SIDES WHICH WAS ORDERED AT LAST MINISTERIAL MEETING BUT CLEARLY NO

DECISIONS CAN BE REACHED UNTIL NEW FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS
INSTALLED.

3. COMMENT: WE, OF COURSE, RECOGNIZE THAT ISSUE OF
ENGINE EMISSION STANDARDS IS CONSIDERABLY LESS EMOTIVE
THAN THAT OF NOISE STANDARDS AND WE BELIEVE THAT
ALTHOUGH BRITISH WILL REACT OFFICIALLY TO ISSUANCE OF
EMISSIONS NPRM, WE WOULD EXPECT OFFICIAL REACTION TO BE
RESTRAINED AND RESPONSIBLE. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS A
DANGER THAT WHILE CONCORDE'S FUTURE REMAINS IMPORTANT
AND ACTIVE POLITICAL ISSUE BOTH IN UK AND FRANCE, THERE
WILL BE MANY IN BOTH COUNTRIES WHO WILL FIND IT EXPEDIENT
TO EXAGGERATE EMISSIONS ISSUE OUT OF PROPORTION IN ORDER
TO DRAG US INTO THE POLITICAL CONTROVERSY. THIS REAL
AND PRESENT DANGER MUST BE WEIGHED AGAINST THE FACT THAT
THE CONCORDE IS NOT NOW A THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT, AND
WE GAIN NO MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS TIME IN THE RULEMAKING
PROCESS IF WE PROCEED WITH AN EMISSIONS NPRM NOW. INDEED
WE BELIEVE THE THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT LIKELY TO BE
POSED BY A FLEET OF CONCORDES WHICH FEW INFORMED OBSER-
VERS, IF ANY, BELIEVE WILL EVER EXCEED A TOTAL OF 16
AIRCRAFT, IS MINIMAL AS COMPARED WITH THE HUNDREDS IF
NOT THOUSANDS OF MILITARY SUPERSONICS ALREADY OPERATING.
IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE CONTINUE FIRMLY TO BELIEVE
IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE FOR USG TO PROCEED WITH
NPRM ON ENGINE EMISSIONS BEFORE BRITISH AND FRENCH REACH
AGREEMENT ON WHETHER CONCORDE PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE AND,
IF SO, SIZE AND SHAPE OF THAT PROGRAM.

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